

**FMFRP 3-201**

# **Spetsnaz**



**U.S. Marine Corps**

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FOREWORD

1. PURPOSE

Fleet Marine Force Reference Publication (FMFRP) 3-201, *SPETSNAZ*, is published to ensure the dissemination of useful information which is not intended to become doctrine or to be published in Fleet Marine Force manuals. FMFRPs in the 3-200 series are a special category of publications: Material about contemporary military organizations and operations.


2. SCOPE

This publication was written from a number of unclassified sources dealing with one Soviet organization known as SPETSNAZ. The information deals with this organization's mission, organization, tactics, equipment, and chain of command. The information presented is pertinent in hostilities with forces employing Soviet-style organizations, doctrine, tactics, or techniques. Marine leaders at all levels are encouraged to review this material and to apply the knowledge to Marine operations in the future.

3. CERTIFICATION

Reviewed and approved this date.

BY DIRECTION OF THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

  
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# **SPETSNAZ**

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## SPETSNAZ

Soviet special purpose forces have many names--reydoviki (raiders), diversionary troops, and reconnaissance-sabotage troops--but they are most popularly known as SPETSNAZ. The acronym is derived from the Russian "spetsialnoye naznachenie," meaning "special designation" or "special purpose." Several articles about SPETSNAZ have concentrated on their sensational and glamorous aspects, such as being sent on assassination missions and masquerading in the West as athletes. This sensationalism with its focus on issues of relatively minor importance impedes the efforts of those who seek a balanced understanding of SPETSNAZ capabilities and limitations.

### 1001. Introduction

The Soviet Union maintains several kinds of forces that are either specifically structured for special operations missions or may be designated for them by the Soviet Supreme High Command. Committee for State Security (KGB) Border Guard troops, Ministry of

Internal Affairs (MVD) Internal Security troops, and airborne troops are all sometimes called SPETSNAZ. The current and former Warsaw Pact allies of the Soviets have similar forces. In this publication, however, "SPETSNAZ" refers only to those select Soviet military men and women who are directly subordinate to the Main Intelligence Directorate (Glavnoe Razvedyvatelnoe Upravlenie or GRU) of the Soviet General Staff and who can conduct sensitive operations in enemy rear areas.

Stealth, surprise, and cold-blooded surgical strike are the tools of SPETSNAZ. An even more ominous asset may be our inability to see the threat in our own background. The following short account gives an excellent example.

On the evening of 27 December 1979, during the preliminary stages of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a team of killers besieged the palace of the president of Afghanistan, Hafizullah Amin, outside Kabul. The team was led by KGB Colonel Byeronov (head of the KGB's terrorist-training school) and supported by a company of SPETSNAZ troops. Moscow's orders were specific: "The secret of our action must be rigorously protected. Do not let any person leave the palace alive."\* The palace guard fought with such ferocity that Colonel Byeronov had to call in a second SPETSNAZ company for reinforcement. By daybreak, the president had been assassinated. Almost all those inside the palace had been killed.

One survivor, an Afghan captain trained in the Soviet Union, succeeded in escaping the massacre. He reported that "the SPETSNAZ used weapons equipped with silencers and shot down their adversaries like professional killers."\*

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\*Sources unavailable for attribution.

This action, others like it, and the potential for similar attacks on other targets concern Western military planners. The quality and numbers of the Soviet Union's special purpose forces represent a serious threat to Western, particularly NATO's, rear area security and forward operation lifelines.

The very existence of GRU SPETSNAZ forces is shrouded in secrecy and deception. Secrecy achieves two desired results. First, it minimizes the information available not only to the Soviet people, excepting only the highest-ranking military officers, but also to the West. This is a definite advantage for units whose success in wartime clandestine operations is based upon surprise. Second, under the truism that "a little learning is a dangerous thing," small bits of information released or published by Soviet defectors or Western writers are prone to exaggeration. Exaggeration benefits Soviet propaganda and disinformation efforts. Secrecy has been so successful that, to date, much Western knowledge of Soviet SPETSNAZ participation in exercises and employment in military interventions has been based on conjecture after the fact. Articles about sabotage, combat swimmer operations, and minisubmarines have appeared in Soviet military journals, but they are all written about "Western capabilities."

SPETSNAZ forces conduct what the Soviets call "special reconnaissance" (spetsialnaya razvedka). The Soviet Military Encyclopedia defines special reconnaissance as: "Reconnaissance carried out to subvert the political, economic, and military potential and morale of a probable or actual enemy. The primary missions of special reconnaissance are acquiring intelligence on major economic and military

## 1002. Roles and Missions

installations and either destroying them or putting them out of action; organizing sabotage and acts of subversion; carrying out punitive operations against rebels; conducting propaganda; forming and training insurgent detachments, etc. Special reconnaissance is . . . conducted by the forces of covert intelligence and special purpose troops."

Within this broad definition, the main tasks of SPETSNAZ in war would be to operate as small groups in the enemy rear to--

1. Sabotage or disrupt key military facilities and/or neutralize (through assassination or kidnapping) political or military personnel. This task is also carried out by the KGB.

2. Gather and report intelligence on vital targets, including fixed and mobile missiles, air defenses, airfields, port facilities, command and control facilities and lines of communication, as well as on the means to deliver nuclear weapons. Primary target emphasis would be placed on enemy nuclear platforms. SPETSNAZ units would either locate them for attack by other forces, or, if necessary, attack these targets themselves. The purpose would be to prevent the war from escalating to the nuclear level in the initial stages of Western retaliation to Soviet conventional attack.

3. Prepare aircraft landing areas behind enemy lines.

4. Prepare for possible use of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons.

5. Disrupt the enemy's power system, the most important targets being power stations, oil and gas storage centers, pipelines, electric power lines, and transformer stations.

SPETSNAZ units are not tasked, however, to engage in guerrilla warfare.

### 1003. Historical Background

SPETSNAZ probably grew from World War II special purpose groups. Their primary mission was to parachute into an area and form the nucleus of a partisan group to be fleshed out with area residents. SPETSNAZ as we know them today were probably not formed until the midsixties, perhaps as a response to increased U.S. emphasis on unconventional warfare, exemplified by President Kennedy's support for the U.S. Army Special Forces.

SPETSNAZ troops have been deployed in several "peacetime roles" which indicate their capabilities for wartime employment. Before the May 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, for example, a reconnaissance-sabotage group attached to the 103d Guards Airborne Division seized Prague airport to enable the division to land. Previously the SPETSNAZ officers and men had been familiarized with the airport and its defenses. They embarked on a plane that claimed engine trouble and received permission to land at Prague. As the aircraft touched down and slowed, SPETSNAZ forces jumped out, seized guard posts, and helped a control team bring in the airborne division. They not only secured vital points until relieved by ground forces, but they also arrested Communist Party leader Aleksandr Dubcek and dispatched him, as a prisoner, to Moscow.

The success of the December 1979 Afghan operation also hinged on tactical deception. Prior to the invasion, SPETSNAZ forces disguised as Soviet military advisors had probably entered Afghanistan. The presidential palace assault force wore Afghan military uniforms; their vehicles had Afghan markings. Soviet military advisors neutralized Afghan Army units whose loyalty to the USSR was questionable through controlling the fuel supply and through deceptions. Examples are having



these units turn over their ammunition for inventory or having them turn in vehicle batteries for winterizing. Thus, in only a few hours, two SPETSNAZ companies not only secured the airport, opening the runways to cargo planes and parachute assault brigades, but also killed the president of the Afghan Republic, permitting his replacement, Babrak Karmal, a Soviet-backed Afghan leader, to assume control.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, four-man SPETSNAZ teams entered Vietnam clandestinely to test the then-new Dragunov SVD sniper rifle in combat.

Midget submarines which were within territorial waters of Sweden in October 1982 and in Japan in August 1983 probably belonged to naval SPETSNAZ. They may have been delivered to the target area by specially equipped India-class submarines. Discovery of tracks from the submarines also coincided with reports of unknown divers appearing on shore, leading to speculation that SPETSNAZ were conducting penetration exercises in foreign countries. The true reasons for these actions may never be known, but their boldness undeniably enhanced the reputation of SPETSNAZ.

Approximately 20,000 Soviet military personnel are stationed abroad, outside the Soviet bloc. Most of these are military aid personnel centrally controlled by the General Staff's Main Directorate for Foreign Military Assistance, but also complemented by GRU and KGB cadres. SPETSNAZ could be among these Soviet military advisors present in such nations as Cuba, Vietnam, Libya, Peru, Ethiopia, South Yemen, Nicaragua, and Angola. It is believed that SPETSNAZ are currently advising and training insurgents in Africa and possibly Cuba.

Any connection between SPETSNAZ and the training of foreign terrorist groups is murky. However, SPETSNAZ forces, by

virtue of their specialized training and political reliability, could be logical choices as instructors of terrorist cadres. Conjecture about SPETSNAZ links to foreign terrorism is prevalent in the free press. The New Year's Eve 1983 demolition of the Cuscatlan Bridge in El Salvador is alleged to have been conducted by freelance Italian mercenaries possibly trained by SPETSNAZ personnel. Another source claims that in Managua at least 60 SPETSNAZ troops worked closely with the Cuban General Directorate of Intelligence and the Sandinista Interior Ministry. Sources say this SPETSNAZ unit has held joint training exercises with members of Puerto Rican terrorist groups flown into Managua from Cuba. Some intelligence experts speculate that the increase in sophisticated, apparently coordinated, and unsolved terrorist attacks against U.S. installations in Europe indicates SPETSNAZ involvement or training. However, any conclusions should be tempered with caution and judgment. These assertions stem from free press sources and not from verified intelligence.

SPETSNAZ forces will probably spearhead Moscow's future military operations in local or global conflicts. In both Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan, SPETSNAZ forces operated under KGB supervision, probably because the KGB was already operating in these areas and could provide some specialized assistance. Experience suggests that the KGB is oriented toward peacetime political-military and political-economic objectives, while the GRU is directed more specifically against an enemy's warfighting capabilities. In wartime, as in the case of the SPETSNAZ forces which operated in Afghanistan, the GRU will control and supervise special purpose forces. Particularly important acts of terrorism, in peacetime as well as war, would be carried out by specially trained groups of foreigners--mainly of Asian

origin--who are under the direct control of the GRU Central Apparatus.

#### 1004. Tactics

SPETZNAZ missions depend on up-to-date intelligence. This intelligence comes from the GRU which has a separate department just for SPETZNAZ. During peacetime, this department collects information on targets and recruits "sleeper" sabotage agents. In addition, it commands SPETZNAZ units.

The Second Chief Directorate of each front-level staff (a front is equal to three or four armies) is responsible for providing intelligence to its own forces. The Chief Directorate includes separate departments for reconnaissance, agent-derived intelligence, SPETZNAZ units, information processing, and signals intelligence. Under the SPETZNAZ department are organized the SPETZNAZ brigade and a dedicated SPETZNAZ intelligence unit.

#### Before War

SPETZNAZ "sleeper" sabotage agents are not ordinary intelligence agents. They might have no other mission than to wait for the order to commit acts of sabotage in preparation for war. They might also acquire safe houses or transportation to support the eventual deployment of SPETZNAZ teams. Besides sleepers, the SPETZNAZ intelligence unit also controls "legal" and "illegal" agents for information collection. Legal agents are accredited representatives of their respective countries (for example, military attaches or Aeroflot representatives) who use their official roles as covers to conduct intelligence activities. Illegal agents operate under deep cover with no apparent connection to

the country to which they are sending information.

Potential SPETSNAZ agents include sailors on board merchant ships on trips to the West or truck drivers crossing international borders. A European customs agreement allows trucks marked "TIR" (Transport Internationaux Routiers) to cross borders with minimal customs formalities. These vehicles can, and do, travel near sensitive installations and through areas that are off limits to accredited Soviet military personnel.

Before the outbreak of war, highly skilled SPETSNAZ may penetrate enemy territory. They may, for example, enter a country in the guise of tourist groups, delegations, or sports teams or as crews and passengers on merchant ships, civil aircraft, or commercial trucks. Furthermore, a certain number of SPETSNAZ officers and warrant officers may be posted to Soviet embassies and consulates in the guise of technical personnel, guards, gardeners, drivers, etc. On the eve of war, there may be a concentration of SPETSNAZ units (on various pretexts and under various covers) in neutral states to infiltrate into enemy territory once fighting has begun. The infiltration of SPETSNAZ personnel into enemy territory is a very risky but necessary operation especially if nuclear weapons are not being used. The purpose would be to prevent their use.

Massive clandestine infiltration of SPETSNAZ personnel into enemy territory before the outbreak of hostilities would risk possibly alerting enemy forces to Soviet mobilization. Therefore, most SPETSNAZ teams would probably arrive afterward by fixed-wing Aeroflot aircraft or Mi-6 or Mi-26 helicopters, using Soviet offensive air operations as cover.

After War's Outbreak

The main SPETSNAZ will be dropped simultaneously on all fighting fronts. Army independent companies will be dropped 100-500 kilometers, and front brigades 500-1,000 kilometers, in the enemy's rear. The professional "athlete" regiments will operate within range of capital cities, regardless of how far these are from the front line. The absence of heavy weapons and equipment makes it possible to use ordinary Aeroflot aircraft to deploy the SPETSNAZ. This in turn makes it possible to concentrate all the efforts of military transport aircraft on backing up operations by airborne forces.

On landing, the SPETSNAZ units will bury their parachutes before leaving the drop zone. Their most dangerous threat at this moment is considered to be the helicopter. After leaving the drop zone, several groups meet and organize a defended base in a safer area where all the heavier equipment is left. They will mine the area around the base and set trip flares.

The groups then set about their tasks, ranging over several tens of kilometers from the base, leaving several men to watch the base from a distance. They will normally relocate the base every night. Equipment will be moved from one hiding place to another. If the base is discovered, its guards will be alerted by exploding mines and trip flares. They will then make their way to a rendezvous point to warn the returning groups of danger. If enemy transport is captured, no base will be set up.

Naval SPETSNAZ paratroops would infiltrate by air drop in the same manner as ground troops or on naval variants of the Mi-24 helicopter. Others wearing scuba gear would most likely be inserted from small boats, fishing or merchant vessels, or minisubmarines launched from an India-class "mother ship" submarine. Their efforts will concentrate on naval

bases with priority on nuclear submarines in port.

Most SPETSNAZ teams will use camouflage and avoid contact with enemy patrols. They will attack if ordered or without orders if a nuclear missile is readied for firing. In that case, the team will try to destroy the missile by small arms fire, and, if not successful, will mount an all-out assault. Since SPETSNAZ commanders operate independently, front headquarters keeps contact and interference to a minimum and relies on the initiative and skill of the team leaders. HQ maintains sufficient coordination to keep teams out of the way of other Soviet attacks.

It is considered that SPETSNAZ operations can be successful only if massive numbers of them take place simultaneously and if others--airborne troops, naval infantry, air assault brigades, divisional deep reconnaissance units, KGB teams, and similar groups from the Warsaw Pact allies--are also operating in the enemy's rear areas.

The most complicated task of SPETSNAZ units is probably the search for targets of special importance. Those targets whose location is accurately known will be destroyed by missiles or aircraft. SPETSNAZ units will have to deal with those targets whose location is only roughly known. In the search for these targets, units will use electronic equipment or will deploy to the limit of visual contact before conducting a sweep on foot. During such a sweep, SPETSNAZ will move slowly and make use of camouflage. Should they meet the enemy, they will not usually engage in combat. They will disperse and meet again at prearranged spots. Once the target is found, they will establish communication with the army or front HQ and pass on the

#### Mode of Attack

coordinates of the target for attack by missiles or aircraft. Then the groups leave the area rapidly in order not to be caught in the attack.

SPETSNAZ will destroy some targets independently. These are usually instances when it is impossible to establish communications with the command base, when the mission is expressly the elimination of a target or person or the seizure of documents, or when an enemy missile is ready for firing. In the latter case, an attack will be made in the face of any odds, even if the group commander is certain that his whole group will perish without doing any damage. The Soviets believe that a sudden attack (even if unsuccessful) may cause the U.S. to cancel the launch or to postpone it in order to recheck all systems and equipment.

Having spotted a missile being readied on the launcher, the sabotage group (or groups) will usually try to destroy it from a distance, using fire from sniper rifles or grenade-launchers. If this is unsuccessful, suicide attacks will be made from different directions. Sometimes a small group will open fire from one direction, thereby attracting attention to itself, while other groups approach the target silently.

More than once during training, SPETSNAZ units have attacked important targets in stolen cars, armored vehicles, and even tanks. It is difficult to say how saboteurs will behave in a real situation, but the experience of World War II showed that the spirit needed for suicide missions was constant and infectious.

Some professional soldiers in SPETSNAZ units, unlike ordinary SPETSNAZ soldiers, will wear civilian clothes. They will make contact with SPETSNAZ agents in place for information, transport, or shelter. Professional SPETSNAZ units will operate in towns,

especially in capital cities, and also in areas where our command centers are likely to be located.

The search for our government and military leaders may be carried out in various ways. In this task, accurate intelligence from agents is regarded as one of the most important elements of success.

Soviet special operations in Afghanistan foretell something of how they may operate in a major war in Europe or Asia. SPETSNAZ tactics now emerging complement the standard Soviet approach of using massive firepower, applied by large-scale mechanized ground offensives, bombing, or helicopter assaults, to depopulate areas of the countryside.

#### 1005. Operations in Afghanistan

The Soviet Union undoubtedly gained valuable combat experience at all levels in Afghanistan, but it did not win the war by any stretch of the imagination. The Soviets were in a low-intensity conflict to support a revolutionary client against counter-revolutionary reactionary forces. The Soviets suffered from their inexperience and from a doctrinal emphasis on centralized command. A counterguerrilla war is a platoon and company commanders' war, but the only Soviet officers encouraged to think in terms of independent operations are in airborne, airmobile, and SPETSNAZ units. As the most flexible, versatile, and independent of Soviet forces, SPETSNAZ units are important in the Soviet search for a counterinsurgency doctrine that does not rely on "cookbook" warfare.

Called "the black soldiers" by the Mujahiden because their faces were darkened for night operations, SPETSNAZ commandoes were highly respected and feared. They followed their own doctrine



in carrying out reconnaissance-oriented operations in the enemy rear to subvert the enemy's ability to resist. The following were among SPETSNAZ missions in Afghanistan.

#### **Long-Range Patrolling**

Extended dismounted independent operations interdicted Afghan supply routes and night movements. SPETSNAZ commandoes were not roadbound like most Soviet units and often were inserted by helicopter. Their "search and destroy" missions identified Mujahiden resistance groups which controlled 85 per cent of Afghanistan. They could call in Soviet artillery fire or airborne/airmobile troop landings to drive the rebels into more open areas. Their helicopter gunship and tactical aircraft could then fire on them.

#### **Joint Operations with Militia**

SPETSNAZ troops were well-suited for independent dismounted operations because of their training. The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) militia were well-suited because they provided intelligence, knew the terrain, and were armed and equipped like the Mujahiden. The counterrevolutionary guerrillas frequently made local nonaggression pacts with DRA forces, and SPETSNAZ took advantage of this vulnerability. Afghan sources reported that Soviet troops dressed as shepherds drove herds of sheep up to Afghan positions and then attacked. To discredit the Mujahiden in areas not under Soviet control, SPETSNAZ troops dressed as counterrevolutionary guerrillas burned mosques and food supplies. SPETSNAZ teams similarly disguised assassinated Ahmed Shah Massoud, one of the more successful Afghan rebel leaders.

Lightly armed, physically fit SPETSNAZ troops often established outposts on hills ahead of Soviet vehicle convoys to prevent ambush. They landed and departed by helicopter.

## Convoy Protection

Extensive minisubmarine activity began in Swedish and Norwegian territorial waters in October 1982 and in Japanese territorial waters in August of 1983. Delivered to target areas by a specially equipped India-class submarine or fishing trawler, minisubmarines are reportedly 20 to 50 feet long and carry three to seven persons. They are propelled by screws but crawl about freely on the sea bottom on two caterpillar treads. Sea-bottom tracks discovered in the Japanese Soya and Tsugaru straits in August 1984 were the same as minisubmarine tread tracks identified by Sweden in 1982 and 1983. Sweden's discovery also coincided with reports of unknown divers on their shores. These reports led to speculation that these penetrations were SPETSNAZ exercises.

## 1006. Operations via Minisubmarines

The Soviets appeared to be reconnoitering prospective opponents: cataloguing the strength and disposition of their forces, assessing their strengths and weaknesses, and identifying promising avenues of approach for future offensives. The many theories about Soviet purposes include the following:

- to collect intelligence on defensive installations and navigational conditions near naval bases.
- to conduct new weapon systems trials.
- to observe foreign military exercises.
- to insert or extract SPETSNAZ teams or agents.

- to test adversary military capabilities, detection systems, and crisis management techniques.

- to lay passive navigation devices such as underwater route markers to safe havens in Swedish and Norwegian fjords. Soviet nuclear-powered fleet ballistic submarines could use them in war.

- to lay mines.

- to remove mines or other underwater devices.

- to locate and tap NATO underwater communication cables. Then they could collect intelligence or feed in false data.

All of these theories are plausible and possibly correct. All are in keeping with the SPETSNAZ doctrinal mission of special reconnaissance. In the event of war, such intrusions will probably occur near the Soviets' key military objectives. These objectives are the strategic Soya and Tsugaru straits on which the Soviet Pacific fleet depends; the strategic Skagerrak and Kattegat straits in the Baltic which are gateways to the North Atlantic; and naval bases, airfields, and defense installations along the Baltic littoral. These minisubmarine operations could have been peacetime rehearsals of plans for wartime deployment of SPETSNAZ commandoes against key political and military targets.

The encroachments against Sweden have an additional advantage. They may support a psychological campaign to intimidate the Swedish government and condition it to accept a status of virtual impotence toward Soviet military predominance. The Soviets may hope that repeated encroachments will wear down the Swedish will to resist. Thus they might crumble the NATO northern flank and extort concessions--such as a tacit license to operate in Swedish territory. To continue these submarine intrusions--even after a Whiskey-class submarine ran aground near the Karlskrona Naval Base on 28 October 1981--increases intimidation.

At the outset of any conflict in Europe, the Soviet Navy must neutralize the Swedish Navy quickly to gain strategic supremacy in the Baltic Sea. This would be achieved best by sabotaging as much as possible of the Swedish Navy in port. Deploying SPETSNAZ teams to neutralize Swedish minefields, early warning sites, command and control facilities, and coastal defenses could also provide access for Soviet landing parties bent on sabotage. Minisubmarines could covertly mine entrances and access routes to naval bases, while combat swimmers attach limpet mines to the hulls of ships in port. The outcome of such an operation would depend on the effectiveness of Soviet reconnaissance efforts and the thoroughness of Swedish countermeasures.

Given the Soviet penchant for planning, the logic behind minisubmarine incursions in Scandinavia would probably apply to other areas of wartime strategic importance. The effectiveness of the Soviet Navy's SPETSNAZ operations in the northern theater immediately raises concern about bases in the United Kingdom and particularly in Scotland which could easily become similar targets. The possibility of such operations occurring in a harbor such as Holy Loch is disquieting.

SPETSNAZ targets in the Far East and Pacific regions might include U.S. military facilities and command and control headquarters at Subic Bay, the Philippines; Yokosuka, Japan; Guam; or Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The Soviet Union currently maintains the world's largest fishing fleet and the third largest merchant fleet (measured in ship numbers). These ubiquitous state-owned civilian vessels could provide unobtrusive clandestine insertion and support platforms for SPETSNAZ teams or

## 1007. Operations in the Far East

minisubmarines during the critical early phases of a war.

Many U.S. and Japanese strategic planners believe that the Soviets probably have detailed plans to gain control of the Soya Strait in wartime. With the Soviet fortification of the northern territories happening at the same time, the minisubmarine intrusions within Japanese territorial waters are evidence that an invasion of Hokkaido from the north could be a Soviet priority. Japan's self-defense forces are aware of this possibility and have dedicated their best airplanes, best ground equipment, and most seasoned troops to the defense of Hokkaido.

SPETSNAZ forces could be crucial to the success of such an invasion. They could neutralize airfields and air defense sites and sabotage logistic and transportation networks in the Hokkaido rear area to create confusion and disrupt reinforcement. Additionally, naval SPETSNAZ teams, using minisubmarines, could mine the strategic straits or conduct countermining operations. The multiplicity of Asian ethnic nationalities within the Soviet Union from which to draw SPETSNAZ personnel, the alleged effective Soviet intelligence agent network within Japan, and the omnipresence of the Soviet merchant and fishing fleet would certainly contribute to the success of such plans.

#### 1008. SPETSNAZ Agents

In the USSR, the word "agent" refers only to a foreigner recruited by the Soviet Union's intelligence services. Unlike agents recruited by the GRU, who are sometimes like the spies depicted in thriller novels, SPETSNAZ intelligence agents carry out more prosaic tasks. Their recruitment is often undertaken from within the Soviet Union or from countries friendly to the USSR (including

Finland). There are no restrictions on who can be recruited, but the most valued are not involved with classified matters and are of mature age. An agent recruited while visiting the Soviet Union returns to his or her own country and recruits several assistants. In no case do the clandestine intelligence agents of armies and fronts attempt to penetrate into restricted areas. Instead, using GRU-supplied money, they buy houses close to important targets (airfields, bridges, missile emplacements, naval bases, etc). The information they provide is often fragmentary and laconic, but, in the case of important targets, it is verified by other agents who quite separately cover the same target. The resulting intelligence will be used by SPETSNAZ sabotage units to deliver sudden and accurate strikes.

Compared to ordinary intelligence agents, SPETSNAZ sabotage agents are rare. A SPETSNAZ sleeper might have no other mission than to wait for the order to commit sabotage in preparation for war. Sabotage agents generally find jobs or live close to transport and power installations. Their task, when ordered by the GRU, is to lay explosive charges and put the installation out of action. Meanwhile, they may or may not collect information. Often such an agent may do nothing else that is criminal during his or her whole life while awaiting this order.

Another important task for SPETSNAZ sabotage agents is the acquisition in peacetime of houses and plots of land where sabotage groups can find refuge in time of war. These houses and plots are usually in the country, not far from the sea or from a forest or in the mountains. They will usually have an ordinary nuclear bomb shelter which is stocked with food and water. In addition, SPETSNAZ sabotage agents may provide sabotage groups with motor transport, fuel, and supplies. They may also guide them to their objectives.

Both intelligence and sabotage agents come under the command of senior front intelligence officers. They can be transferred from one category to the other at any time or, indeed, can be ordered to fulfill both roles. In principle, SPETSNAZ agents in peacetime have little or no contact with Soviet citizens outside the Soviet Union. This preserves their credibility as members of the community in which they are living. Their SPETSNAZ handlers have reliable means of checking on them so that they can be reasonably certain that in wartime foreign recruits will either carry out their allotted tasks or at least try to do so.

#### 1009. SPETSNAZ Cover

Because SPETSNAZ are part of the GRU, the ordinary citizen in the Soviet Union knows practically nothing about them. Many precautions are taken to cover up their strength, organization, function, deployment, and even the very fact of their existence.

All candidates for SPETSNAZ forces undergo a preliminary loyalty check and, on entry, have to sign a statement promising to protect official secrets. Breaking this promise is punished as espionage--by death.

Most SPETSNAZ units wear the uniform of the airborne forces (VDV) although they have no connection with them. Air assault troops also wear the same uniform. Distinguishing between these three types of troops is, thus, very difficult. There is a distinction between airborne troops and the others, which were created after World War II. During the war, all eight airborne divisions distinguished themselves in battle and were awarded the titles of "Guard" divisions. Thus, a soldier wearing the uniform of airborne forces without the guard's badge belongs to either the air

assault or SPETSNAZ forces. The sole noticeable difference between SPETSNAZ and air assault forces is that the SPETSNAZ are usually deployed by parachute and very seldom use helicopters, whereas air assault troops use nothing but helicopters and have no parachutes. These differences are minor but can help analysts studying photographs and film.

SPETSNAZ forces deployed in Eastern Europe are stationed close to large headquarters with communications troops and wear the same uniform, making identification almost impossible. SPETSNAZ midget submarine crews wear standard submariners' uniforms. All other officers and men in the SPETSNAZ naval brigades wear naval infantry uniform.

SPETSNAZ intelligence units are deployed where there are particularly sensitive targets such as missile and rocket bases, penal battalions, and nuclear-weapon storage facilities. No SPETSNAZ unit is based independently. A SPETSNAZ unit normally shares barracks with airborne or air assault troops. Naval SPETSNAZ units are collocated with naval infantry units. Where SPETSNAZ troops are stationed near other types of troops, they adopt the latter's uniform.

When units share barracks with other forces, all contact between SPETSNAZ personnel and those of other units is forbidden. The SPETSNAZ unit has its own enclosed and well-guarded compound.

In the different military districts and groups of forces, units have different titles. In Ground Security Forces Germany (GSFG), for instance, they were called reydoviki (raiders), whereas in the Siberian Military District they are called okhotniki (huntsmen). As a result, when SPETSNAZ troops from different areas meet each other by



chance, each thinks that the other belongs to a different organization. The generic term SPETSNAZ is used only by officers when talking amongst themselves.

SPETSNAZ do not have their own schools and academies. Officers are trained at the Reconnaissance Faculty of the Kiev Higher Combined-Arms School and at the Special Faculty of the Ryazan Higher Airborne School. While at these schools, SPETSNAZ personnel are almost indistinguishable from their fellow students. Higher command personnel and officers involved in secret service work are trained at the Third Faculty of the GRU Academy.

To limit the circle of those aware of the GRU and the SPETSNAZ in peacetime, SPETSNAZ companies are detached from their army-level commands to become directly subordinate to the staffs of military districts and groups of forces. The independent companies are grouped to form a battalion in the SPETSNAZ brigade found at the military district and group level. In the event of war, this battalion is broken up. The independent companies go back under the command of their respective armies.

To conceal the professional nucleus of the SPETSNAZ, anti-VIP (anti-very-important-person or special target) headquarters companies are detached from their parent brigades to become military district, group of forces, or fleet athletic teams. SPETSNAZ regiments, which are manned entirely by professional soldiers, are disguised as sporting teams belonging to the Central Army Sporting Club (ZSKA). The same deceit is used by professional KGB saboteurs who belong to the Dynamo Sporting Club. The Soviet Union's combined Olympic team is, for the most part, made up of professional SPETSNAZ from these two very wealthy and highly successful clubs.

The basic SPETSNAZ operational unit is a team of eight to ten men. The team is commanded by an officer and may have a warrant officer or senior sergeant as deputy. It includes a radio operator, demolitions experts, snipers, and reconnaissance specialists. Team members have some degree of crosstraining so that a mission can continue if a specialist is lost. (See Figure 1.)

# 1010. Organization

Each small-arms or tank army has one SPETSNAZ company or battalion with about 91 to 225 men, organized into varying numbers of teams and platoons. A company consists of a headquarters, three parachute platoons, a communications platoon, and support units. It includes nine officers and eleven warrant officers. When conducting sabotage operations in the enemy's rear areas, the company may operate as a single unit or

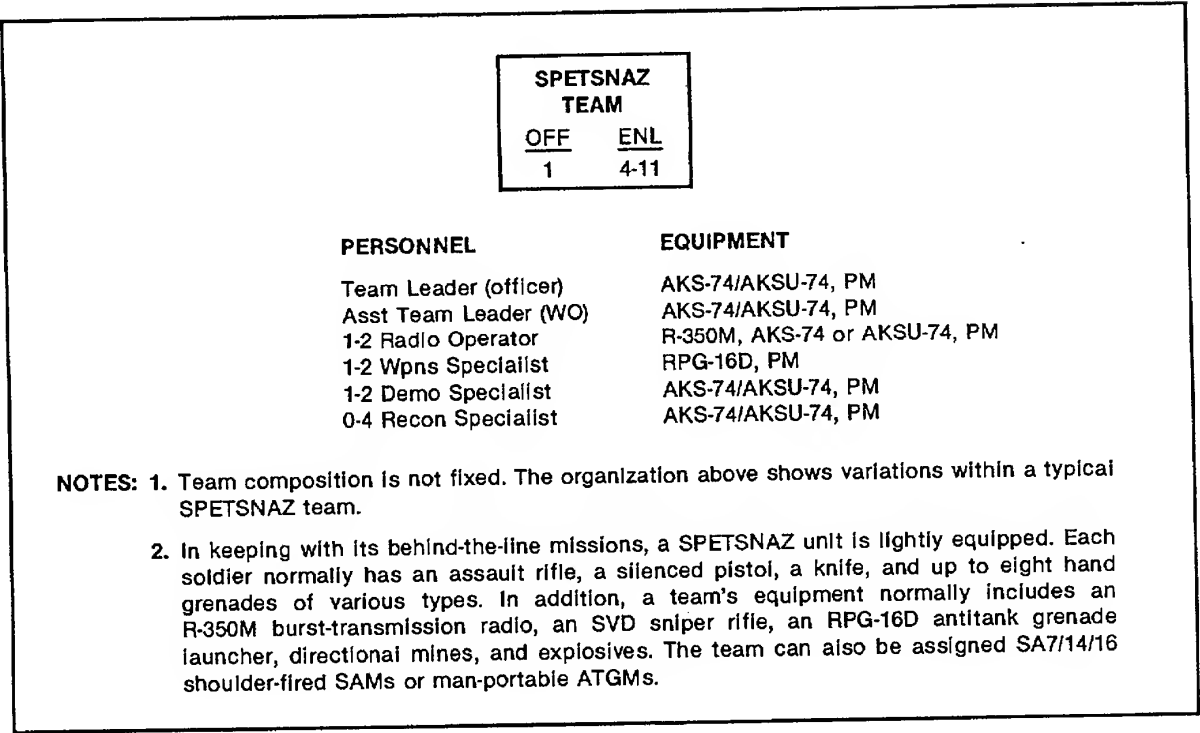


Figure 1. SPETSNAZ Team, SPETSNAZ Company, Army or Front.

be divided into smaller groups. The maximum number of groups is 15. Subdivision of a company is not rigid, however, and the formation can change while an operation is in progress. If necessary, each group can operate independently. The communications platoon can set up and maintain communications with all groups over a range of 1,000 kilometers. (See Figure 2.)

Each wartime front has generally three or four armies and one tank army. In support of the armies, but independent of them, SPETSNAZ companies would operate in small groups at depths of 100 to 500 kilometers in the enemy rear. In addition, three SPETSNAZ long-range reconnaissance regiments (700-800 men) directly subordinate to the GRU would be allocated to the commander in chief of

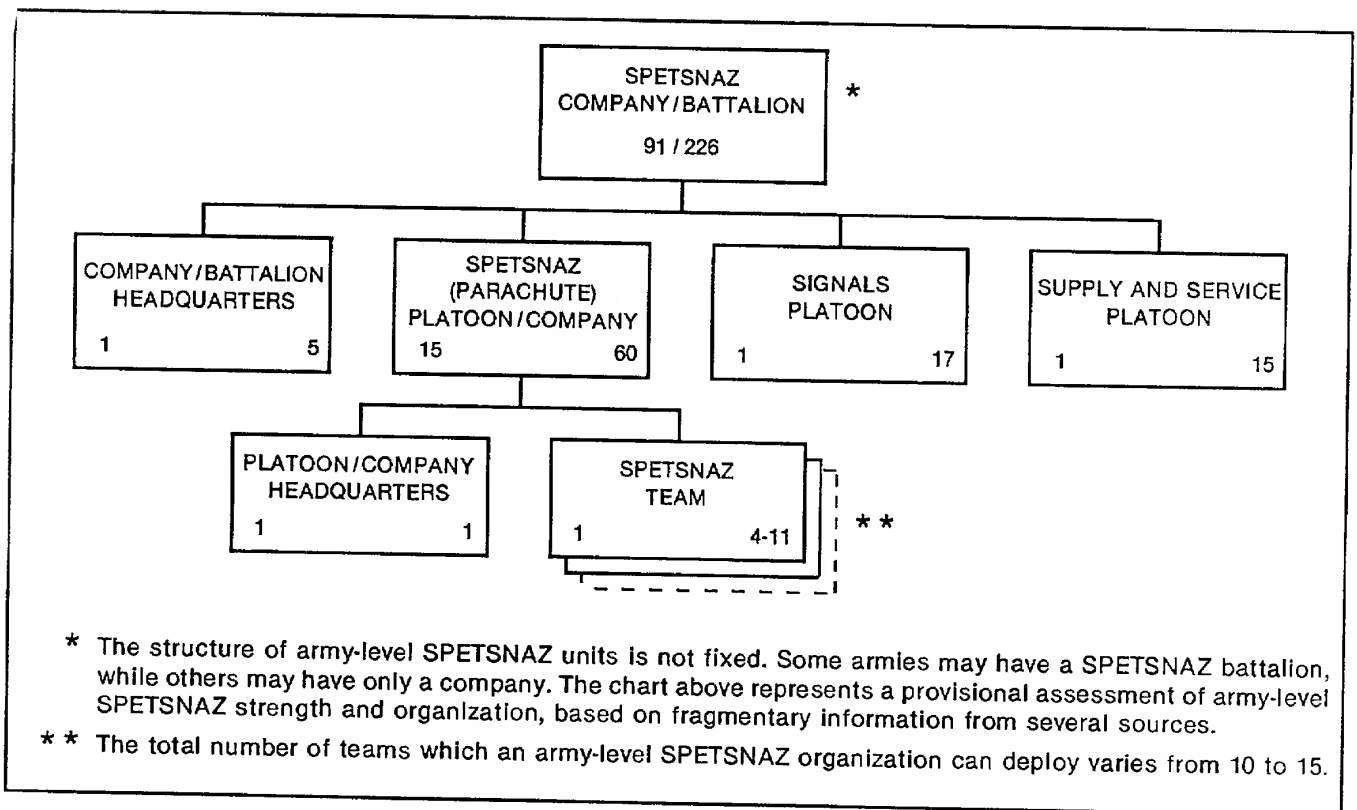


Figure 2. SPETSNAZ Company or Battalion, Army.

each strategic directorate (which consists of three or more fronts and a fleet).

The most identifiable SPETSNAZ formations belong to the GRU. SPETSNAZ diversionary brigades (with a wartime strength ranging from 900 to 1,300) are supposedly assigned to each Soviet military district (or front, in wartime) and to each of the Soviet's European allies. Each brigade consists of a headquarters company, three or four parachute battalions, a signals company, and support units. These brigades, operating in small groups 500 to 1,000 kilometers behind enemy lines, pave the way for frontal forces that will attack through areas cleared by nuclear action, air attacks, and sabotage. (See Figure 3.)

Each of the four naval fleets also is assigned a naval SPETSNAZ brigade. These brigades reflect an emphasis on sea infiltration. Each has a headquarters company, a parachute battalion, a minisubmarine group, and two to three frogmen/combat swimmer battalions, as well as a signals company and support elements. (See Figure 4.)

SPETSNAZ peacetime strength has been estimated at 15,000 to 30,000 although the lower range seems more realistic. An accurate figure is difficult to ascertain for several reasons. First, the less critical military districts (especially the interior ones) that are not oriented toward NATO or China may not deploy a full brigade. Second, all SPETSNAZ brigades may not be maintained at full strength in peacetime. Third, the Soviets strive to conceal their true strength. Soviet defector Viktor Suvorov states that during wartime mobilization the number of SPETSNAZ forces could be increased four- to fivefold by recalling reservists who previously served in SPETSNAZ detachments.

The Soviet Union's aim is to have the following SPETSNAZ units available at the outbreak of war:

-16 SPETSNAZ brigades, one per front organization;

-4 SPETSNAZ naval brigades, one per fleet;

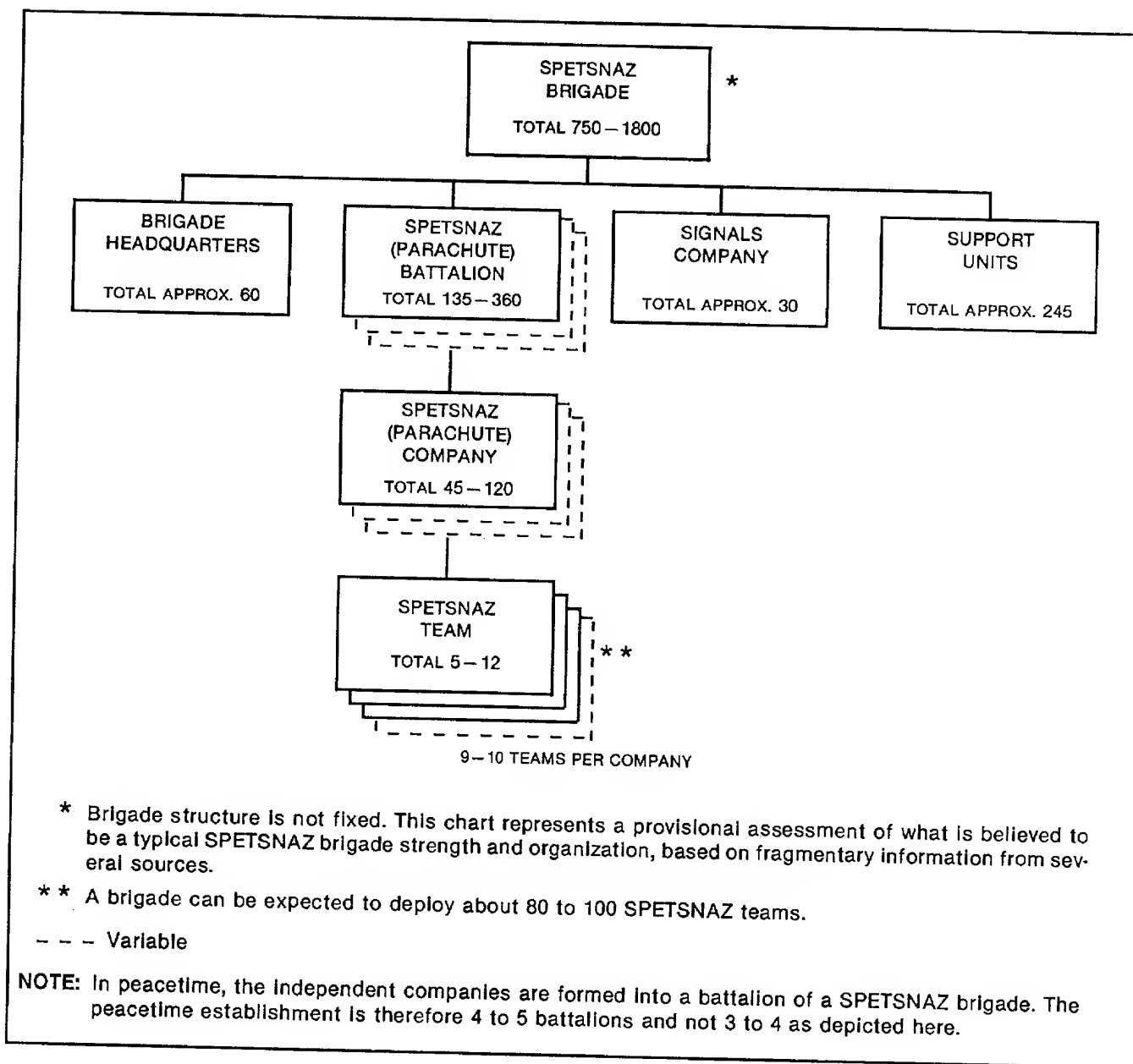


Figure 3. SPETSNAZ Brigade, Front.

-20 SPETSNAZ intelligence units, one with each front and fleet;

-3 SPETSNAZ regiments which can be allocated to commanders in chief (CinCs) of the strategic directions (which consist of three or more fronts and a fleet);

-Sabotage agents and detachments controlled centrally by the Second Chief Directorate of the General Staff (the GRU Central Apparatus).

The groups of forces and military districts (which in war would become fronts) have at their disposal 800-1,000 intelligence agents and 80-110 SPETSNAZ agents. The fleets have 160-200 intelligence agents and 20-30 SPETSNAZ agents. The total number of agents available to the GRU's Central Apparatus cannot even be estimated. It is impossible to guess the numerical ratio between intelligence and sabotage agents. Suffice it to say that the GRU Central Apparatus has at its disposal a larger number of agents than all the armies, fleets, and fronts put together.

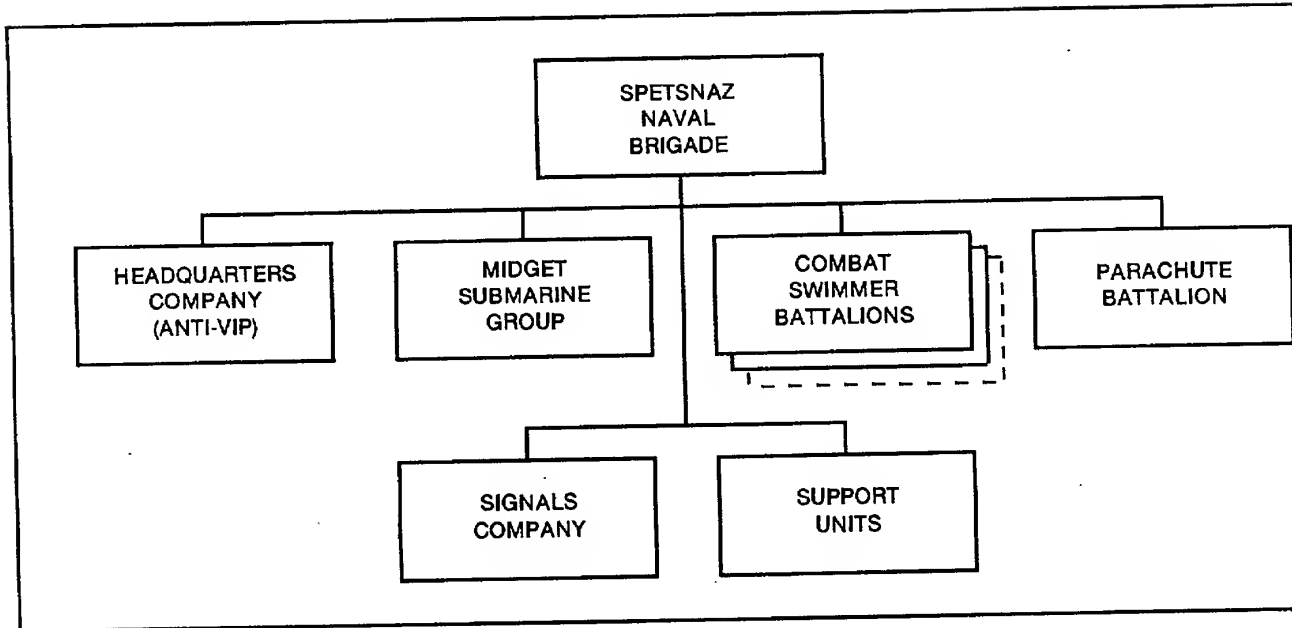


Figure 4. SPETSNAZ Brigade, Naval.

#### 1011. Personnel

Stringent standards are required of all conscripts assigned to SPETSNAZ. Potential reydoviki must be secondary school graduates, intelligent, physically fit, and, perhaps most important, politically reliable. Parachute training with a paramilitary youth organization is naturally a plus. Upon induction, SPETSNAZ conscripts will be asked to sign a loyalty oath in which they acknowledge that death will be their punishment for divulging details about their service.

Most SPETSNAZ units are manned by ordinary, but strong, hardy, and quick-witted conscript soldiers. The selection procedure begins long before recruits are called up to reception centers to start their military service. Before that, every Soviet recruit is categorized according to loyalty to the regime and physical and intellectual development. Those recruits in the highest category go to the Kremlin Guard, KGB government communications troops, SPETSNAZ, and KGB frontier troops. Thus SPETSNAZ can select the best men even to the detriment of other elite forces such as airborne forces, strategic rocket troops, and nuclear submarine units.

Once they arrive in their SPETSNAZ units, the soldiers undergo a short, but highly intensive course of military training during which natural leaders emerge. These leaders are then sent on to SPETSNAZ training battalions to become sergeants. Each company usually sends more soldiers to become sergeants than it needs. This is an expensive practice, unusual in the Soviet Union. In training battalions, competition is so fierce that only the best will be awarded the rank of sergeant. The course is extremely tough; some of the candidates ultimately return to their units as private soldiers. Even some of those who become sergeants return to their parent companies to be employed as private soldiers. Thus, only the very

best achieve command. This practice makes it possible to have a permanent reserve of sergeants who can quickly replace any other sergeant who is not maintaining high standards. Knowing this, men strive at all costs to retain their authority. This is possible only through ruthless control of subordinates. More than one third of all SPETSNAZ soldiers pass through the sergeant training courses with the result that heavy losses in war would not seriously weaken lower command echelons.

The reserve of warrant officers and officers is also very high in SPETSNAZ units. Compared to a normal Soviet Army company's 5 officers and 1 warrant officer, a SPETSNAZ company has 9 officers and 11 warrant officers.

Most soldiers in a SPETSNAZ brigade are two-year conscripts. Individual SPETSNAZ teams of these elite conscripts are led by professional officers. The headquarters company assigned to each brigade, on the other hand, is manned entirely by full-time professionals. They are fluent in one or more languages of their areas of potential operations. They are trained and equipped to operate there not in camouflage uniform but in civilian clothing or in the enemy's military or police uniforms. These headquarters companies are also the only SPETSNAZ units that may establish contact and act together with SPETSNAZ agents in a military operation. Headquarters companies are maintained in the highest state of readiness. Cloaked in secrecy, they are supposedly detached from their parent brigades, posing as parachutists, boxers, wrestlers, martial arts experts, marksmen, and sports teams of the military districts, groups of forces, and fleets. Allegedly, many officers and sergeants do not even suspect the existence of such companies within their brigades. The SPETSNAZ regiments of the strategic directorates are similarly composed of full-time professionals.



According to unconfirmed reports, the Soviet Union replaces members of its sports teams with SPETSNAZ personnel. Senior Lieutenant Valentin Yerikalin, who won a silver medal for rowing at the 1968 Olympic games, was an officer of the Black Sea Fleet naval SPETSNAZ brigade. Several years later, he was arrested by Turkish authorities while trying to recruit agents in Istanbul.

The number of athletes in SPETSNAZ is not coincidental. The Soviet Union needs prestige. One way of providing this is by winning Olympic medals. The country needs an organization with draconian discipline to squeeze the maximum effort out of the athletes. At the same time, SPETSNAZ needs athletes of the highest caliber who have the opportunity to visit areas where they may operate in time of war. The athletes, for their part, need opportunities for training. They benefit from belonging to an organization that can reward them lavishly for athletic achievement--give them apartments and cars, award promotions, and arrange trips outside the Soviet Union. SPETSNAZ thus provides a focal point for the interests of state prestige, military intelligence, and individuals who have dedicated themselves to sport.

The ZSKA sends its athletes all over the world without hiding their military ranks. The KGB, which also has the role of assassinating enemy VIPs, has its own similar organization, the Dinamo. Between ZSKA (Army) and Dynamo (KGB), a bitter struggle continues to "poach" the best athletes from other sports clubs and societies. It is of note that the number of women athletes in SPETSNAZ is unusually high.

Very little documentary evidence of the activities of these professional assassins has been published. However, there is one old, but convincing example from the Great Patriotic War (World War II), before the creation of SPETSNAZ.

During the war, the NKVD (now the KGB) had a unit called the MOSBON NKVD USSR, or NKVD independent special service motor-rifle brigade. This brigade trained and launched behind enemy lines 212 detachments and groups totaling 7,316 men. Their basic task was to kill political and military leaders. In addition, the brigade wiped out known and potential enemies in the nations "liberated" by the Red Army. According to official figures (quoted in "Home Forces in the Great Patriotic War"--Moscow, **Yuridat 1975**, Document No. 278), this one brigade alone annihilated 140,000 people. The brigade was made up of "NKVD and state security workers, units of frontier and home troops, distinguished athletes, including many famous top-flight names, and antifascists of various national groups recommended by the Comintern." In this sentence, we find all the components which also exist in SPETSNAZ today, i.e., ordinary, but carefully selected and trained soldiers; top-grade athletes; foreigners; and, at the head of all of these, professional intelligence men.

SPETSNAZ does not have its own officer training schools and academies. To maintain secrecy and ambiguity, officers are recruited from the best in other service branch schools. The high reserve of officers and warrant officers in SPETSNAZ companies is necessary since SPETSNAZ commanders operate independently behind enemy lines. Team leaders are both required and authorized to exercise more initiative than the average Soviet officer.

SPETSNAZ careerists (officers and warrant officers) are well-compensated. Each year of service with a SPETSNAZ unit counts as 1 1/2 years for pension purposes. Incentive pay is 50 per cent of salary. As in other airborne units, all SPETSNAZ members also receive parachute jump pay which varies with the number of jumps. Jump pay can exceed a conscript's regular salary.

Despite the seeming isolation of SPETSNAZ soldiers from other military elements for operational security reasons, SPETSNAZ facilities often appear to be positioned with other military units, albeit in enclosed and well-guarded compounds. As cover, SPETSNAZ ground forces usually adopt airborne or signal troop uniforms. Naval SPETSNAZ wear naval infantry or submariner uniforms. Their ethnic composition is not distinctive. To some degree, it matches the ethnic characteristics of the intended target areas. For example, SPETSNAZ units in the Soviet Far East are alleged to include North Koreans and Japanese from Manchuria and the Kurile Islands.

#### 1012. Training

The GRU Central Apparatus is responsible for SPETSNAZ training battalions, training centers, and communications courses. In peacetime, the three elements of SPETSNAZ--combat units, units of professional athletes, and foreign agents--do not have the opportunity to meet each other and often do not suspect each other's existence. Because of differences in their combat roles, they are also trained separately.

Foreign agents are trained one by one in special training centers mainly on Soviet territory. One such center is in Odessa. The main subjects of the training course are security, communications, demolition (theory and practice), and collaboration with professional groups.

Professional athletes are trained in small groups and sections. Their main subjects are physical training (in some cases to Olympic level), foreign languages, study of the territories in

which they are likely to fight (during sports trips abroad), communications, and demolition.

Basic military training for conscripts is conducted within the units. In addition, SPETSNAZ soldiers learn parachuting; hand-to-hand combat and silent killing techniques; sabotage using explosives, incendiaries, acids, and abrasives; infiltration techniques which include defeating locks and security systems; foreign languages and culture; survival; reconnaissance and map reading; and rappelling. Some naval SPETSNAZ soldiers also train in diving and minisubmarine activities. Parachute training begins with static line jumps and for many goes on to high altitude, low-opening and high altitude, high-opening jumps to prepare for covert insertion. Jumps are made day and night over all types of terrain regardless of weather.

A SPETSNAZ unit's wartime target area determines its foreign language and culture training. The team leader is expected to be nearly fluent in one of the languages of a target country. Enlisted team members are expected to know the alphabet and basic phrases. This training is intended not only to facilitate operations but also to enable teams to conduct missions while wearing enemy uniforms or civilian clothing.

The technical training schedule allows time for rigorous physical training. It includes obstacle courses and forced marches, often conducted wearing gas masks. Some units are also trained in mountain climbing and skiing. Up to half the training year is spent out of garrison. Once or twice a year, selected teams engage in realistic unannounced exercises conducted under harsh combat conditions. Exercise objectives are often operational

installations guarded by regular troops or soldiers of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

SPETSNAZ combat training is made to resemble actual battle as closely as possible. The role of the enemy in exercises is played by the home forces of the MVD, KGB government communications troops, local KGB units, and the police. The main task of all these forces is the security of particularly important targets and therefore combating subversion. For this reason, the leaderships of the GRU, KGB, and MVD are equally interested in carrying out combined exercises and in the painstaking study and analysis of the experience accumulated.

In an exercise, a SPETSNAZ unit could be dropped anywhere in the Soviet Union. It could then be required to patrol or ski hundreds of kilometers to neutralize the guards of an actual Soviet military installation and to assault it in a manner approaching actual combat. At the same time, regular Soviet troops are dispatched on the trail of the SPETSNAZ forces, tracking them throughout the region. Casualties often mark such exercises, but realism serves a dual purpose. SPETSNAZ teams practice their own tactics (confronting their vulnerabilities to helicopters and guard dogs during movement) while they raise the combat readiness of the home security forces tasked to repel raids.

Once a year, the best SPETSNAZ units from all over the Soviet Union assemble at the main training center in the region of Kirovograd. For three months, they undergo an intensive period of training and competition. Coincidentally, this center is adjacent to the Sheltye Vody group of uranium mines and concentration camps.

Elaborate brigade training areas contain full-scale mock-ups of enemy weapon systems and enemy facilities from likely theaters. They further indicate the serious intent of SPETSNAZ training. Brigades assigned against NATO forces typically have models of Lance, Pershing, and ground-launched cruise missiles, as well as mock-ups of airfields, nuclear storage sites, air defense sites, and communications facilities. These mock-ups are used for both equipment familiarization and demolition training.

As an example of a training exercise, the SPETSNAZ brigade of the Fifth Army in the Far Eastern Military District (whose headquarters is Ussuriysk) attacked headquarters and missile units. On the whole, the brigade's operations were successful except for an attack on a nuclear weapons store. The SPETSNAZ groups fell into a trap. The store commanders had arranged their vehicles in such a way that, when the alarm was sounded, all vehicle headlights switched on at the same time. Thus, they formed a blazing field of light around the store and blinded the saboteurs. The defenders then loosened guard dogs. The defense was so successful that now most Soviet headquarters, signal units, and missile units form a circle of vehicles at night with a system of signals. On command, the surrounding area can be lit up.

During combat training, KGB and MVD units and also Soviet Army headquarters use countermeasures against saboteurs that range from a system of total control of radio traffic to the use of helicopters and aircraft. Experience has also shown that dogs are still the simplest and most effective way of combating saboteurs. This opinion is held by both the KGB and SPETSNAZ.

In addition to mock operations against real Soviet military objectives,

SPETSNAZ units also train in centers where likely theaters of action are realistically reproduced in great detail. In the Carpathians, in the region of Yavorov, the terrain is reminiscent of the French Alps. The Baltic coast is like northern Germany. Inflatable models of Lance, Pershing and Pluton missiles, howitzers, aircraft, etc. are used. Despite the effort to replicate equipment and uniforms, it is considered much more important to recreate the enemy's tactics and methods of interrogation. Saboteurs will be subjected to these methods, should they be caught. These lessons are very instructive and long-remembered.

#### 1013. Weapons

In keeping with their behind-the-lines missions, SPETSNAZ teams are lightly equipped, though armed with the best weapons available. Each soldier will be issued one of the various Kalashnikov rifle models, designed for airborne/airmobile units--the AKM, AK-74, or the new short-barrelled AKR carbine. In addition, he will carry a silenced 9-mm pistol, ammunition, a knife, up to eight hand grenades of various types, and rations, along with a portion of the team's gear. This might normally include an RPG-16D grenade launcher and rounds, a Dragunov SVD sniper rifle, an R-350M burst transmission radio with a range of more than 1,000 kilometers, directional mines, and plastic explosives. If the mission demands it, the team might also be assigned special weapons such as the SA-7, -14, or -16 surface-to-air missiles. The SPETSNAZ has no heavy weapons. When operating in the enemy's rear, saboteurs may seize enemy tanks, armored personnel carriers, or other vehicles. While doing this, they may even wear enemy uniforms.

In a series of experimental exercises, SPETSNAZ units have used light motorcycles and specially constructed,

small crosscountry vehicles. It is difficult to say, however, whether these will become standard equipment.

SPETSNAZ units are remarkable for their considerable independence of action. The commander of a sabotage unit usually has very great power behind the enemy lines. A SPETSNAZ unit dropped into an area of particularly important targets operates independently from then on. Army, front, and even higher headquarters interfere in the operations of saboteurs only if more important targets are discovered or if saboteurs must be brought out of the area (e.g., before launching a nuclear strike). Higher headquarters try not to interfere in the belief that the commander behind enemy lines can see the situation more clearly. Coordination between active SPETSNAZ units subordinate to different headquarters is organized merely by the allocation of boundaries and the timing of strikes.

In war, Soviet units other than SPETSNAZ will be operating in enemy territory. Among these are the following:

Reconnaissance battalions of motor-rifle and tank divisions contain deep reconnaissance companies which hardly differ from SPETSNAZ in their role and tactics. The only difference is that these companies are transported behind the enemy lines in helicopters, jeeps, and light armored vehicles and are not dropped by parachute. Deep reconnaissance companies have far fewer men than SPETSNAZ companies. Each may deploy only 5, not 15 sabotage teams. There are, however, considerably more companies. Deep reconnaissance units do

#### 1014. Coordination

#### Deep Reconnaissance Comp



not usually work with SPETSNAZ. Deep reconnaissance operations range to a maximum of 100 kilometers behind enemy lines. This limit allows SPETSNAZ units to concentrate their activities farther in the enemy's rear without being distracted by operations close behind them.

#### **Front Air Assault Brigades**

Sometimes SPETSNAZ units may guide the combat helicopters of front air assault brigades to their targets, although they most often operate independently. Occasionally combined operations between heliborne air assault forces and SPETSNAZ saboteurs are possible. So is the use of air assault brigade helicopters to evacuate prisoners and wounded SPETSNAZ.

#### **Airborne Divisions**

The High Command's plans dictate the operation of airborne divisions. In the event of supply difficulties, they switch to purely guerrilla tactics. Although the operations of powerful airborne groups behind enemy's lines create a situation favorable to the operation of SPETSNAZ, it is not usual to combine them. In two situations, a superior headquarters will organize direct cooperation between units operating in the enemy's rear: One is when a combined attack is the only way to destroy or capture the target. The second is when Soviet units in the enemy's rear have incurred very heavy losses. The Soviet command then improvises groups from the remnants of other units.

#### **1015. Results Justify Cost**

The Soviet command is fully aware that SPETSNAZ operations will involve enormous

sacrifices. Experience in training and in war shows that losses may be enormous during an airborne assault. At the same time, Soviet commanders remember the consequences of two partisan operations during World War II. Operation RAILWAY WAR began on August 3, 1943, at the height of the battle for Kursk, when Soviet forces went into an offensive. About 100,000 civilians-turned-guerrillas took part, derailing 836 special trains and blowing up 556 road bridges and 184 railway bridges. The enemy's rear area was paralyzed over large areas. In one operation, 215,000 lengths of railway track were blown up.

On an even greater scale was Operation CONCERTO, in which 120,000 guerrillas took part. CONCERTO was mounted while the Red Army was attacking and forcing the crossing of the river Dnieper. In the opinion of Marshal of the Soviet Union A. Yeremenko, "without CONCERTO, the forcing of the Dnieper would have been impossible."

The GRU, also known as the Second Chief Directorate of the General Staff, is responsible for reconnaissance (voiskovaya razvedka); agent-derived intelligence (agenturnaya razvedka); SPETSNAZ training and operations; processing and dissemination of information on the enemy; and radio-intercept, or signals intelligence. The GRU coordinates operations of all subordinate levels of Soviet military intelligence. In addition, it has its own very high-powered organization of clandestine foreign agents, some of whom are recruited for assassination and terrorist activities.

## 1016. Chain of Command

The division of responsibilities at the GRU level is replicated at levels below it. The second directorate of the staff at each of the levels where

SPETSNAZ units are deployed (from army level upwards) consists of five groups, numbered as follows:

- I. Reconnaissance
- II. Agent-derived intelligence
- III. SPETSNAZ
- IV. Information processing
- V. Signals intelligence

SPETSNAZ is thus subordinated neither to reconnaissance nor to intelligence.

To coordinate the activities of several fronts and fleets in time of war, high commands are set up in at least three strategic directions (Western, Southwestern, and Far Eastern Strategic Directions). The commander in chief of each strategic direction may have one SPETSNAZ regiment placed under his direct command. In peacetime, these SPETSNAZ regiments are commanded directly by the GRU Central Apparatus (the Second Chief Directorate of the General Staff).

In wartime, at front level headquarters (in peacetime at the headquarters of groups of forces and military districts), the same five activities are under the second directorate, divided into groups with the same titles and numbers. The SPETSNAZ department of the second directorate has under its command a SPETSNAZ brigade plus a SPETSNAZ intelligence center, which is responsible for recruiting its own clandestine foreign agents. Front staff's second directorate thus controls two independent networks of foreign agents, one run by the intelligence department and one by the SPETSNAZ department.

The headquarters of every Soviet fleet also has a second directorate similar to that in the front headquarters. It has the same functions and departments as its land-based counterpart. It includes a group of intelligence agents, a group of SPETSNAZ

agents and, in this case, a SPETZNAZ naval brigade.

At army level, the SPETSNAZ group of the staff's second directorate has under it an independent SPETSNAZ company. The second directorate commander may give information from the intelligence group's clandestine agents to the SPETSNAZ company in order to direct it toward its targets.

The size and quality of the SPETSNAZ establishment point out the need for effective security of key Western installations. Awareness of the threat is crucial and demands--

## 1017. Western Countermeasures

-Continued education of the military audience, NATO in particular;

-Realistic integration of SPETSNAZ play into Western military exercises;

-Continued research into SPETSNAZ capabilities, facilitated by better cooperation among Western intelligence services;

-Identification of likely SPETSNAZ targets and the development of appropriate security for them (possibly mobilizing reserve personnel as rear area security forces); and

-Greater international cooperation among intelligence services to monitor Soviet SPETSNAZ activity--including its fishing and merchant fleet--worldwide. Although it would be impossible to keep sufficient forces to track and target all of the vessels in the Soviet Union's fishing and merchant fleet, a priority system might be established to monitor the larger and more important vessels.

At the very least, local security forces should be on guard when Soviet ships linger nearby.

The Soviet Union has made an enormous investment in special purpose forces. The West must also improve its own special operations forces in order to respond rapidly, flexibly, and appropriately to all levels and types of aggression, from low-intensity conflict to global confrontation. Improvement is essential, not just because the Soviet Union is doing it, but because the effectiveness of such forces has been proven.

#### 1018. Conclusions

The average SPETSNAZ commando is not ten feet tall. Despite their qualifications, rigorous training, and demonstrated value, SPETSNAZ forces have several weaknesses. Since most SPETSNAZ personnel are conscripts on two-year tours of duty, opportunity for cross-training in specialties and languages is limited. Some may lack the degree of motivation and professionalism that characterize Western unconventional warfare forces.

Much of the success of SPETSNAZ infiltrations depends upon how quickly the West learns of Soviet mobilization. Although SPETSNAZ forces may be composed of hundreds of teams, they cannot all be simultaneously inserted much before D-Day. The chance of compromise is too great. In addition, once tensions increase or the West receives advance warning of impending hostilities, many of the clandestine means of insertion and support will be terminated. Legal agents will probably be expelled from Western countries. Aeroflot landing rights and Soviet merchant vessel port visits will be terminated. TIR truck passage privileges will be curtailed.

In comparison to Western unconventional warfare forces, SPETSNAZ units lack specialized infiltration aircraft like the U.S. Air Force MC-130E Combat Talon. This lack severely limits SPETSNAZ capabilities for clandestine insertion, particularly just prior to the start of hostilities. As a result, SPETSNAZ units must rely upon the brute force of a Soviet air campaign to cover most infiltration. If Soviet fighter-bombers and other means do not inflict the necessary damage to enemy air defenses, unarmed transports would be attacked before the teams even arrive on target.

Nonetheless, SPETSNAZ forces pose a formidable wartime threat to Western and particularly NATO's rear areas. From the Soviet perspective, the investment in a force of several thousand highly trained men is small compared to a potential payoff: neutralizing enemy nuclear delivery capabilities, degrading air defense and communication systems, and, indirectly, increasing the effectiveness of Soviet aircraft, missiles, and ground forces through SPETSNAZ-assisted targeting. SPETSNAZ teams are an effective force multiplier. By neutralizing enemy nuclear systems, they increase the surprise of the main attack, allowing Soviet forces to exploit superior margins of conventional military power. By creating panic and disruption in rear areas, they cause forces to be withdrawn from the front lines to meet the rear area threat and thus weaken enemy resistance.

The Afghanistan experience gave Soviet leadership a greater degree of operational confidence to assert itself especially in situations it may have previously avoided. It should no longer be assumed that the Soviet Union will project power in all instances with the same conservatism. The strength and varied capabilities of SPETSNAZ forces can effectively advance Moscow's strategic interests in the Third World.

This can be done through direct political action against unstable regimes or through more indirect means. These could include training and support of anti-Western insurgencies, wars of national liberation, or terrorism. In many Third World conflicts, even a modest military interposition could influence the outcome. An on-ground Soviet SPETSNAZ presence can quickly supplement indigenous revolutionaries before the arrival of U.S. or allied rapid deployment forces. Such an action could present the West with a fait accompli. Since surprise is the Soviet trademark, the West's lacks in information and readiness can be SPETSNAZ's greatest weapons.